



Wedding songs of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar-A Musical Resistance to the Popular Perceptions of Masculinity and Patriarchy

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Abstract

These songs are not written but are remembered by women and passed on from one generation to another. Along with it, women spontaneously create rhyming lines targeting specific rituals being performed at that moment in the wedding. In orthodox societies of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, marriages are often arranged and negotiated between two families rather than it being a personal affair between the prospective bride and groom. In such marriages, often the bride and women are at the bottom of the decision-making process. Thus, critiquing this power dynamics, some misogynist rituals, or the dowry system associated with such marriages in a gathering becomes a symbol of resistance and protest. However, the resistance emerges not solely from song lyrics but also from the interplay of material (lyrics), body (performers), and space (sites of performance). In contrast to modernised versions of the sangeet ceremony orchestrated in urban spaces, these traditional weddings and rituals gave rural women the space to voice their dissatisfaction with the system a lot more musically and effectively. It may be a result of censorship on language, collective social morality, and hegemonic patriarchal society that stifles the voices of reason, despite the customs around marriage or dominant rituals remaining the same. This paper will delve into the history and continuity of such songs, their importance as a voice of dissent, and present-day relevance in society.

Keywords: Gaari Geets, Traditional Marriages, Women Performers, Patriarchy, Resistance, Voice of Dissent.

Introduction

In this paper I will be exploring the traditional wedding songs of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. I have been intrigued by the repertoire of songs sung by women in and around traditional Hindu weddings in these regions. These songs are commonly called “gaari geets” translating into abusive songs. These songs are sung by a group of women in and around various rituals during a marriage ceremony. In quintessential settings of a patriarchal tradition Hindu marriage ceremony women do not have agency in the larger scheme of things. Their participation and inclusion are limited to physical labouring for the event, which can crudely be compared to a modern-day wedding planner or catering service providers. The role of women in such patriarchal and traditional families has been diminished and voices are confined to the four walls of their household with very less to no significance. In case of a matrimonial alliance between two families, the choices of women in terms of a matrimonial alliance are either considered to be of lesser importance or in some cases non-existent. This paper focuses on the songs being sung by women in marriages of that are arranged in these societies.

The songs can be positioned in as an act of resistance by the women in these societies; where marriages are “arranged” between the male members of the family keeping various factors such as caste, class, physical appearances, job of the man, and dowry (money or gifts given by the family of the bride to the groom). This transactional setting is the foundation of these marriages where the groom and bride do not have much choice of forming a bond of equals or a partnership of mutual love, respect and affection. These marriages are heavily dependent on socio- economic standing of the parties rather than an interpersonal relationship between two people. In traditional Hindu weddings of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, gaari geets serves not just as a tool of entertainment or music during the ceremony but they question the traditions, critique some sexist customs/ rituals of marriage particularly dowry and ideals of patriarchy and masculinity whose prevalence in society and dominance on an orthodox traditional marriage forms the basis of the entire structure of the marriage market. Along with the lyrics of the songs, performers and space act as a symbol of resistance against the patriarchy and perceived masculinity of male members in these societies. Performers are not professional singers but are

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all women who are a part of such families and had similar marriages along with a lesser agency as compared to their male counterpart. The space plays an important factor of elevating the performances from mere sarcastic songs sung within the four walls of their home to a booming voice of resistance in front of the large group gathered for a traditional ceremony, upholding the essence of such patriarchal houses very women have a very submissive minimal role. These songs and the performance can be hailed as a protest voiced by women against toxic masculinity running in these societies yet the dichotomy lies in some songs where women from the groom's family are humiliated, targeted and often times directly branded as a person with ambiguous morals and unsatisfied sexual appetite. These explicit sexual innuendos associated with the women of other family is not meant to humiliate the women but are meant to disgrace the men of these families, which arises the greater question of women being held as the custodians of family/ societal honour. In an attempt to humiliate the men and criticise the traditions that uphold and promote these structures; women who are associated to them or are in their family are targeted in some lyrics.

The dichotomy of women being insulted to criticise patriarchy and fragile masculinity of men in their family is a convoluted fact of this musical genre. In modern times, the rise of larger-than-life cinemas portraying a certain aesthetic in weddings have led to traditional customs being sidelined in lieu of grand venues, costumes and more importantly choreographed dance performances in sangeet / mehendi ceremony rather than them days before the wedding being a closed event where women from immediate family could freely sing gaari geets. As families migrated to urban cities the weddings became events and the focus shifted from age old rituals of women singing to everyone performing choreographed dances on songs from the movies. Sangeet became a separate event a day before the wedding where both families or each family had they dance performances as per the trend and their relation to person getting married. These urban weddings created a space that looks and feels modern in essence of the word but does not allow any leud, sexual or mocking lyrical escapade to happen in the event space. The marriage ceremonies of different cultures may have been mingled with each other owing to urbanisation, rise of modern media and aspirational movies moving away from traditional "crass" songs and performances yet the ghosts of dowry, domestic violence and loss of agency of a woman in and after marriage has been the same. If the subjugation of women in this set up has not changed drastically these songs as a form of microaggression should also be preserved, protected and promoted. Marriage as a sacrilegious ceremony loss its chastity when it is based on monetary benefits and other socio-cultural yardsticks.

Marriage as a transaction

In order for society to perform and follow a certain dictate marriage and especially "arrange" marriage plays

an important role in maintaining the status quo of men in the society. Arranged marriages mean that the family has a decision making a committee which mostly comprises men from that family and relatives who select a girl for the groom. From an external perspective, this selection process can be compared to a recruitment mechanism, wherein candidates that in most cases is the bride, who are evaluated on the basis of socially sanctioned criteria, educational credentials, and perceived soft skills. One of the titillating factors in "arranged marriages" in these two regions are the dowry the bride family will be able and willing to give to the Marriage, in this context, resembles a negotiated institutional arrangement rather than an exclusively private union between two individuals; it is frequently deliberated, negotiated, and formalized by family members, reflecting broader social, economic, and cultural considerations.

The economic factor involves the system of dowry. Money and gifts given by the bride's family to the groom's family for agreeing to and accepting their daughter/ girl for marriage. A society that has a rigid patriarchal structure whose foundation relies on the domination of women marks this transaction as an initiation into the family structure. The dowry makes the women see themselves as inferior to her husband and men in the general hierarchical setup. The rituals during the wedding ceremony and marital life later on reinforces this notion of women being second- class citizens in their own households are pushed to a liminal space both physical and in terms of authority in the marriage as well as household. This is to set the pretext of the condition of women in the most common form of marriages in these societies and the states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

Gaari Geets in traditional hindu weddings

The traditional hindu weddings in pre modern times or in rural areas weddings went on for days. In those times women used to sing songs to fill the void by singing in a group. The wedding party travelled for months and stayed in the bride's village for a long time thus it became a necessity to fill the void in between these rituals by having some form of entertainment. Music became a natural choice as it required a lot less arrangements and performers as easily available. Though women are not part of the decision-making process yet the labour centric works and arrangements are put on their shoulders. In this case women are not active participants or participate in the rituals, the priest is a man and very few family members take part in the ceremony. Women are again pushed to the spectator stand with very less to do, thus making their voice heard is as much as an act of defiance as it is about having music for the ceremony.

These two words "gaari geets" would translate into abusive songs. These songs and music are an eccentric part of the oral tradition of these states and wedding ceremonies. The lyrics of these songs are not documented, written for each wedding specifically or

exist in the common sphere. They are created each time to address the people attending the wedding, especially people from the groom side of the family. The basic structure of these songs are committed to memory and passed from one generation to another. A tune that is commonly easy to follow has been etched into the memory of the performers. They take names of the attendees and make a rhyme which is insulting, often critical of their behaviour or list the things taken as dowry to humiliate and make fun of the groom's side of the family. Marriages when fixed in these societies, from the inception of it groom is treated like a superior being who should be respected and worshiped for marrying the bride. This worship starts at the gate of the wedding venue where he is welcomed by the bride's side of the family. While this ritual takes place at the entry of the wedding venue the group of performers all women sing gaari geet for his welcome. This scene is such a stark contrast between the respect and attention given to the groom and his family as opposed to the background music which is criticising every aspect of the groom and the very rituals that are being performed. Culturally, these two states have same gender norms, patriarchal family and social structure.

There is no documentation of evidence of the first time gaari geets were sung in hindu weddings. In the state of Bihar people and performers commonly believe that gaari geets were sung in the wedding of Lord Ram and Sita. The Valmaki Ramayana does not mention these songs. In Bihar, the folklore suggests that gaari geets were sung for the first time during this wedding as in the mythology Sita is the princess of Mithala, a place that still exists in modern Bihar. On a societal level, this gives performers a safe pass to criticize and abuse the patriarchal systems as toxic masculinity prevalent in marriages as these songs were hurled at Lord Ram himself, who is a popular god in these areas and a prominent avatar of Vishnu. In historical documentation of the region of Uttar Pradesh there is no evidence or trace of the beginning to this genre of music. Yet, it can be assumed that both present-day states have similar social fabric of customs, religion and practice of female singing during weddings. In other states many communities have many songs sung by women during weddings, but they do not typically have profane language or sexual innuendos. During my research to establish the first documentation of such songs I came across a book by Umesh Chandra Pandey and Helen Prescilla Myers titled *Storytime in India: Wedding Songs, Victorian Tales, and the Ethnographic Experience*. This book Pandey describes the entire process of traditional hindu wedding from selection of the groom, discussions about dowry and the final rituals associated with the wedding. Tilak is an important pre-wedding ceremony, where the groom is blessed by the bride's family. Symbolically the tilak ceremony marks the signing of the marriage contract. In this book Pandey explains that dowry in form of cash is given to the groom along with

other gifts signifying the translation is done and the groom is now bound to marry the girl/bride. This is a ritual where a paper mentioning the date and gifts given to the groom's family is mentioned. This is called "lagan patrika" therefore the idea of marriage being a social contract between two parties is cemented through this ceremony. In this ceremony the bride or women in general are not an active participant. Pandey mentions that during this ceremony women are singing in a separate room. These songs are hymns to lord Shiva and goddess Parvati. In this incident there is no mention of gaari geets. The lyrics of these hymns are translated in English and documented in the book, so it can be assumed that this particular wedding was an anomaly where gaari was not sung as tilak ceremony. In my observation, this ceremony allows the women from the groom's side of the family to sing gaari geets and mock the men from the bride's side of the family. But in this book, the songs are civil and religious. It cannot be determined whether it was a conscious choice on the part of the author or in this particular occasion women did not sing any gaari geets, the occurrence of which seems quite unlikely.

The element of resistance in Gaari Geets

In these states where the patriarchal setup where women are not given enough space to participate in the small and larger scheme of things. They are confined to the inner space of the household and muted in the general and physical sense of the term, singing abuses are a form of resistance to this set up. The idea of resistance in such a set up stems from the idea of critiquing the restricted male dominated society that dictates the rules of the wedding and marital relationship afterwards. As masculinity and male pride forms the basis of such society's women are pushed to the margins of the household. Family structures and relationships significantly influence Indian masculinity, with patriarchal norms often governing family dynamics. Traditional Indian families emphasize male authority, with fathers and elder sons holding power over women and younger sons. (Uberoi, 2006) Women in these societies do not enjoy a status equal to men, their opinions and voices are silenced within their own household where they contribute in terms of labour, produce children and even take the burden of organizing the wedding by working as event labourer. When women are in such an inferior position throughout their everyday life. Overcoming such barriers of sexism and conformity within the four walls of house, women organically form a band and sing outside the confines of the four walls in a male dominated public event becomes an act of resistance. Thus, this genre of music symbolises the shift in identity of women from being mere hands in the weddings to a booming voice of reason. In an article Vishal Ranjan says "Gaali, as a distinct genre of festive humour, serves ...as an exclusive domain of women's expression, safe channels for a carnivalesque

celebration of female sexuality....my context of analysis here is the 'traditional' north-Indian wedding within predominantly Hindu communities. The following analysis must be understood in the context of those communities which still operate within a 'pre-modern' culture of strict sexual repression and relations organised around authority." Rajan opines that these societies and traditional weddings are very regressive in nature thus women singing about patriarchy, questioning and mocking fragile masculinity and female sexuality creates a carnivalesque atmosphere that gives female performers a space and voice to express their opinions, educate the young bride about physical intimacy and reality of the dynamics between her in laws and her own status in the marital home.

Resistance in the lyrics

Lyrics are the most powerful medium in conveying the meaning of songs. In this genre the lyrics are hard hitting and embody the vigour of the resistance. The music and tune of the songs are common so performers, attendees and others all know the general tempo of this performance. The lyrics however are created on the spot by the women performing at the ceremonies. They add the names of the men from the groom's family, dowry and other events happening in real time to the lyrics. The lyrics of these wedding songs operate as a layered and culturally embedded form of resistance against the deeply rooted structures of patriarchy and the dowry system. At first glance playful and humorous, these songs strategically deploy satire, mockery, and innuendo to destabilize dominant gender hierarchies. By openly teasing and ridiculing the masculinity of the groom and other male members of the family, they expose masculinity not as an unquestioned authority but as something performative, fragile, and open to critique. In a striking reversal, there are references to violence that is often experienced by women within domestic spaces. These instances are reworked into jokes aimed at men, subtly shifting the power dynamic and allowing women to momentarily reclaim agency through voice and laughter. In regions such as Bihar, women deliberately incorporate mentions of dowry into their lyrics, calling attention to the transactional nature of marriage and the greed of the groom's family, thereby voicing dissent against an otherwise normalized practice. The use of sexual innuendo further expands this space of expression, enabling women to articulate desires, frustrations, and critiques that are typically silenced in formal discourse. Importantly, these performances take place in weddings which are prestigious social ceremonies. This ensures that such subversive messages are widely heard, remembered, and circulated across generations. In this way, the songs not only entertain but also "mouth the woes" of an unequal system, transforming collective memory into a site of critique. The challenge to patriarchy, therefore, is not external to the tradition but deeply rooted within its

lyrical fabric, making these songs a vital, enduring medium through which women negotiate, question, and resist the social structures that seek to confine them. Here are some examples of the lyrics which sheds light on the aspect of resistance embodied in these songs.

"yante jaayego kahan daadi maar lagaaye dungi, daadi maar lagaaye dungi chanak te chaar lagaye dungi!"

"Where will you go from here now. I will thwack you, I will thwack you and I will slap you on your face four times!"

"Mero hasne ko swabhaav, logo gilla na karna, Dulha ke papa kiaan khfod du to, haaye andho hai jaaye, logo gilla na karna, Mero hasne ko swabhaav, logo gilla na karna, Dulha ke tau ke kaan kaatlu to, haaye behro haijaaye, logo gilla na karna!"

"I have a very humorous nature; people please don't mind it. If I ruin the eyes of Groom's father, Oh, he will become blind then people please don't mind, I have a very humorous nature. I have a very humorous nature; people please don't mind it. If I cut the ears of the groom's uncle, oh, he will become deaf then people please don't mind!"

"Ghodi bangaale se aayi, jaa pe chadho na utro jaaye, Le godi baake tau chadhaave uchal uchak rah jaaye, Le godi bake chacha chadhava uchal-uchak rah jaaye, Le godi chaachi taai chadhaave haal uchak chadh jaaye, ghodi bangaale se aayi, jaa pe chadho na utro jaaye!"

"The horse is brought from Bengal; the groom is finding difficulty to sit on it. His uncle take him on his lap to help him to sit on horse but fails. His other uncle again tries the same but fails. Now the wives of these uncles take the groom on lap and finally they are the one who succeeds. This horse has been brought up from Bengal, the boy finds it difficult to sit on it!"

The groom's masculinity and sexuality are mocked in these lines. The groom's inability to mount the horse is an indication of his sexual impotence. His uncles and other men from the family are equally if not less incapable of teaching the groom anything about consummating the marriage. Women in his family rise up to the occasion and teach him how to mount the horse which metaphorically means the women teach him about consummating the marriage. These lyrics also point out at the fact that women who do not get agency in the household are in reality superior in intellect and understanding the nuances of marriage, things that are important to keep it working and life in general. This is in stark contrast to the men in his family who cannot accomplish a small task without the help of women. All these aspects of gaali geets places it right at the frontline of resistance to patriarchy yet in order to insult the men the performers

often insult the women in their family through the lyrics.

Women as custodians of the “family honour”

While these wedding songs undeniably articulate a sharp and often subversive critique of patriarchal authority, they simultaneously expose the limitations of such resistance by remaining deeply entangled within the very structures they seek to oppose. The mockery of the groom’s sexual prowess intends to diminish his masculinity and his family’s lineage that has been hailed superior to the bride’s family due to which they were able to secure a handsome dowry and gets treated with respect before, during and after the wedding. The lyrics hint that the physical appearance of the groom is an indication of his sexual prowess which is not enough for the bride and she might seek satisfaction elsewhere. Plamer argues that women who do not get a chance to voice their opinion creates a performative space in which female desire is

momentarily voiced and legitimised; as such expressions may even gesture toward a culturally embedded acknowledgment of women’s sexual agency. (Plamer, 1994) However, this apparent subversion operates within a broader social order where, as Jean Chapman (2014) notes, the patriarchal household is structured around the authority of the male head, whose role is to regulate and control women’s sexuality in order to preserve caste, class, and social continuity. It is within this tension that the paradox of these songs becomes most visible.

In their effort to critique and shame the groom’s family, women performers frequently deploy profane, sexually charged language directed not at men alone but at the women associated with them; such as sisters, aunts, or mothers. By accusing these women of promiscuity or moral looseness, the songs draw upon and reinforce the very ideological framework they seek to destabilise that being the notion that a family’s honour is located within the sexual respectability of its women. Such rhetorical strategies, while effective in producing humour, shock, and symbolic inversion, ultimately reinscribe the burden of shame onto female bodies. In this sense, the critique of patriarchy becomes mediated through patriarchal values themselves, revealing a form of resistance that is both expressive and constrained. In these lyrics the groom’s sister is insulted, as remarks made about women’s character reflect poorly on the family’s honour and men of these families will be insulted when the women are humiliated.

“Tohar behni chinnar ghume sehar bajar, rakhe sau sau go yaar , tani sunlo”

“Your sister is a prostitute; she roams around cities and markets. She has relationship with hundreds and hundreds of men, listen to this”

Thus, although these songs “mouth the woes” of systemic inequality and offer a culturally sanctioned space for women to ridicule masculine authority, they do not fully escape the logic of the system they challenge. Instead, they reproduce its underlying assumptions by

perpetuating the association between femininity, morality, and honour, thereby displacing critique onto other women rather than dismantling the structure as a whole. The result is a complex, layered form of resistance is that at one level that it is neither wholly oppositional nor entirely complicit, but rather indicative of how deeply internalised patriarchal norms continue to shape even those expressions that seek to question and subvert them. Public humiliation has been in practice from ancient times and in various civilisations to keep the individuals in check and reinforce the moral and social laws onto them. Thus, these songs create their own importance owing to the space of the performance.

The Performers and the Space

These songs being heard in a gathering and emerging as songs of resistance owes to the fact that they are being sung in a traditional gathering, a ceremonious occasion whose terms are dictated by the oppressive societies that are intrinsically patriarchal in nature. These societies even within the ambit of a family structure as a unit do not provide an unbiased space to vocal women. Women within their own marital house and relationship often do not have the agency to channelize their feeling, their ordeals and suffocation. When these marginalised individuals form a troupe organically in a wedding ceremony, they collectively get a voice that uses the garb of humour, sexual innuendo and personal attacks to tackle the larger issues faced in traditional marriages. The gender of the performers is as important as the space in which they perform these songs. As women are often termed as “lesser” in comparison to men, performing these songs paint a different picture in reality. Women remember the songs, they present these songs with exemplary spontaneity, musicality and wit in targeting the attendees from the groom’s side in the wedding. According to Judieth Butler gender is a performance that the female body is trained to play. When they break away from this role and freely express themselves, these songs become a voice of resistance and protest.

‘In order to establish the importance of space and the collective group of performers I asked an individual performer to sing gaari geets for me in the comfort of her home. I asked a woman to sing these songs for my research, she refused. I informed the performer that this would be an audio recording in the comfort of her house, but she was reluctant. She said “aise ghar me akele acha nahi lagta aise gaane gaana”, its not good to sing such songs at home individually. Then I requested her again, and she said “I have forgotten the lyrics and tune.” On persisting persuasion, she said “thik hain, badi bhaabhi ko

aane do tab saath me mil ke record krdenge” let my sister-in-law come, we will sing it together for your recording.” These two performed together for the recording.’ While recording this session, I found some disparity between the gaari geets sung at weddings and the lyrics of these songs for recording. Their voices were soothing; the lyrics were milder and their performance felt restrained. It was changed from a very provocative voice to a very smooth and soft voices. Their larger gestures of performing them disappeared from their body and they were constantly saying “Bhaiya aajayenge tumhare, acha nahi lagega unhe”, “your brother will come and he won’t like this.” This variation in the quality of overall performance can be linked to the lesser number of performers and the space of the performance leading to the establishment of the fact that these songs can be hailed as voice of resistance largely due to the sheer number of women singing it and the space in which it is performed. The strength of collective makes these songs a voice of dissent which loses its charm when an individual who does not possess agency within her own household sings it. The other significant shift from a booming voice to soft and mellower version is the fear of the private space which is governed and controlled men of that household.

As much as the performers, space plays a significant role in elevating a form of entertainment or jibe taken at someone into a form of resistance. Women who come at the bottom of the hierarchy in their own household that does not voice their dissatisfaction openly. The space of performance must be understood not simply as a physical or ceremonial setting, but as a dynamic and socially produced site where power, identity, and resistance are continuously negotiated. Within the context of wedding rituals, this space acquires a layered significance: it becomes a liminal arena in which normative hierarchies are momentarily loosened, allowing voices that are otherwise constrained within patriarchal structures to surface with collective force. Women, often relegated to the margins of formal discourse, inhabit this performative space through song, humour, and satire, transforming it into a medium of both expression and critique. Those who are not entitled to have an opinion on the wedding and later on all aspects of the matrimony within their own households, have cultural right to sing about it in what can be considered as one of the most important social gathering in such traditional societies. Such performances are deeply embodied practices, shaped by repetition and cultural memory, which simultaneously reproduce and unsettle dominant gender norms. The gathering of women fosters a sense of intimacy and solidarity, creating conditions under which dissent can be articulated without direct confrontation. In this way, the performative space operates as a subtle yet potent counter-public, where alternative narratives are voiced, shared, and sustained. It is within this interplay of conformity and resistance that the space of performance reveals its transformative potential as not only an overt

site of rebellion, but as a nuanced terrain where every day acts acquire political resonance. This entire point of accepting these songs as a part of protest can be linked to the larger problem of domestic violence meted to women for dowry and the dominance of men in this traditional setup.

The larger problem of Dowry, Dominance and Violence

The persistence of dowry-related violence in India reveals the deeply entrenched structures of patriarchy that continue to govern familial and social relations despite legal reforms. Data from the National Crime Records Bureau between 2017 and 2022 indicates that an average of approximately 70,000 dowry deaths were recorded during this period, a figure that likely underrepresents the actual scale due to systemic underreporting and social stigma. Dowry, far from being a symbolic or voluntary exchange, operates as a mechanism of coercion and control, often placing newly married women in positions of vulnerability within their marital homes. The continuation of such practices manifests in forms of physical and psychological abuse, with many daughters-in-law subjected to sustained torture, harassment, and, in extreme cases, fatal violence. In 2022 alone, over 45,000 cases of domestic violence against women were officially registered, with 31.4% categorized specifically as cruelty by husbands or immediate relatives. Regional disparities further highlight the structural nature of this violence, as states like Uttar Pradesh consistently report the highest number of crimes against women, recording over 65,000 cases in the same year. These statistics point not only to the scale of the crisis but also to the normalization of such violence within everyday domestic spaces. Within this oppressive framework, cultural practices such as women’s wedding songs emerge as important sites of expression and resistance. Through satire, mockery, and coded language, these songs historically enabled women to articulate dissent, critique patriarchal authority, and momentarily invert power hierarchies in socially permissible ways.

Homogenisation of weddings

However, the landscape of wedding traditions in contemporary urban India reflects a significant transformation that has contributed to the marginalization of these expressive practices. Increasingly, weddings are shaped by homogenized, media-driven aesthetics that privilege spectacle, glamour, and conformity over localized and participatory traditions. In this context, the genre of women-led wedding songs which are often characterized by playful irreverence and direct engagement with themes of sexuality, power, and kinships frequently dismissed as vulgar or uncivilized, and relegated to rural or “backward” cultural spaces. The rise of highly curated pre-wedding events such as the sangeet ceremony exemplifies this

shift, where performances are choreographed, rehearsed, and aligned with popular film music rather

than rooted in community-based oral traditions. Additionally, cinematic representations of weddings have reinforced sanitized and idealized narratives that leave little room for the raw, unfiltered voices of women performers. As a result, what is being lost is not merely a musical form but a crucial cultural space where women collectively negotiated their identities, expressed grievances, and subtly resisted patriarchal constraints. Women dance on choreographed songs on sangeet rather than singing gaaris in an urban wedding set up. This on the surface would seem like a positive shift towards a developed societies where educated women This transition underscores a broader tension between modernity and tradition, where the pursuit of respectability and standardized celebration often leads to the erasure of subaltern voices and the silencing of historically embedded forms of critique.

Conclusion

In conclusion, women's engagement with performative spaces within ritual contexts such as weddings illuminates the complex ways in which resistance can be embedded within tradition itself. These musical and expressive practices, often dismissed as peripheral or entertaining, in fact constitute deeply meaningful acts of negotiation that challenge entrenched systems of patriarchy from within. Through the use of humour, irony, and collective voice, women articulate critiques of authority, question prescribed gender roles, and expose the contradictions inherent in social hierarchies. What emerges is not a form of resistance that seeks to dismantle structures outright, but one that operates through subtle disruptions, re-significations, and shared affective experiences. These performances demonstrate that agency need not always manifest in overt defiance; rather, it can reside in the ability to carve out spaces of expression, however fleeting, within restrictive frameworks.

Ultimately, such practices underscore the enduring resilience and creativity of women's voices—voices that persist in finding ways to speak, to connect, and to reimagine the terms of their own existence within deeply orthodox social worlds.

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